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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000341

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SUBJECT: TAIWAN MOFA PROPOSES POL/MIL TALKS

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Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young
Reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is proposing U.S.-Taiwan political-military talks in Washington, at a date to be determined. North American Affairs Division Director General Harry Tseng would lead Taiwan's delegation, at least for the first of what MOFA envisions to be an annual dialogue. A key MOFA goal for the talks is to learn from the U.S. model as Taiwan looks to improve its own interagency coordination on security issues. The proposal would complement existing dialogues which tend to focus on strictly military issues and should strengthen the relatively weak political and interagency aspects of our bilateral security relationship. Recommendations for a possible structure and agenda for the talks is included at paragraph 6. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Taiwan has proposed annual political-military talks in Washington to complement the twice-annual pol/mil visits to Taiwan led by AIT/W. In a March 25 conversation with AIT Pol Chief, MOFA North American Affairs Division DG Harry Tseng said that, to alleviate U.S. concerns about the profile of the talks, VFM Andrew Hsia decided not to lead Taiwan's delegation, at least for the first round. Tseng emphasized that Taiwan hopes the level of representation can be reconsidered as the talks prove their usefulness. As a practical matter, Hsia's decision not to take part would affect the composition of Taiwan's delegation. For example, MND had proposed sending a general officer but now would be represented at a lower level. Tseng also indicated flexibility on the dates, given U.S. concerns that May or June would not be feasible.

¶3. (C) While MOFA is prepared to suggest specific agenda items, and the Taiwan delegation would be prepared to discuss specific issues, Tseng stressed that important goals for Taiwan are to learn how to structure its relatively weak interagency process and how to improve and strengthen Taiwan's civil-military relationship. All Taiwan would ask is assistance in putting together a schedule of USG meetings, Tseng said. TECRO is prepared to handle all administrative and logistics issues and expenses for the delegation. Tseng emphasized that Taiwan intends to keep the visit low profile, as it does with the AIT/W-led visits and the Monterey Talks.

Considerations

¶4. (C) These talks have the potential to strengthen our bilateral security relationship with Taiwan and contribute to our overall objective of maintaining a peaceful and stable Asia-Pacific region. Security cooperation activities in support of our significant defense-related commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act have led to a robust U.S.-Taiwan military-to-military relationship. Such cooperation, however, has largely neglected the political and interagency component that buttresses our security relationship. Taiwan's proposal provides an opportunity to address this by developing our relationship in a more strategic direction that includes, but is not dominated by, military issues. It also would shape our security dialogue with Taiwan in a manner similar to those we have with other defense partners, where State and Defense lead separate but complementary talks, with the State-led dialogue focusing on political-military issues (i.e. interagency cooperation, export controls, foreign policy issues) and the DoD talks focusing on traditional defense related matters (i.e. strategy, threat, and security cooperation).

¶5. (C) Giving Taiwan civilian and defense officials at working levels better access to more senior U.S. officials and letting them hear a broader range of U.S. voices is

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particularly important now, during a time of significant change in the U.S., Taiwan, and in cross-Strait relations. By providing a platform for greater political-military exchange and offering Taiwan one model for interagency coordination, the MOFA proposal would help advance Taiwan's fledgling efforts to improve policy coordination and would also enhance the role of Taiwan's civilian leadership in formulating defense policy. The Taiwan military has in the past jealously guarded its ability to set the parameters of defense discussions, but greater interest and capabilities on the part of Taiwan civilian partners would assist the shift to a more integrated pol-mil policy process here. This initiative also could provide a mechanism to gain greater insight into Taiwan leadership's thinking on how efforts to strengthen military capabilities also can support efforts to improve cross-Strait relations.

Possible Structure

¶6. (C) A possible structure for the talks follows:

Level: The U.S. delegation could be led by a State DAS (EAP, possibly joined by PM), with possible drop-bys or office calls with more senior State or other USG officials. Depending on the agenda, USG participants could include State, DoD, NSC, DHS, AIT, and others. Possible Taiwan participants include MOFA, NSC, MND, MAC, SEF, the Executive Yuan Homeland Security Office, and TECRO.

Timing: One day of formal talks, with possible smaller-group follow-on meetings or site visits. Specific dates would be determined through consultations with Taiwan.

Venue: Because of policy restrictions on meetings at State, the talks would be held at either a USG facility not affected by policy restrictions or a commercial venue where sensitive and/or classified discussions may take place.

Agenda: The agenda should complement existing dialogues, with emphasis on broader defense and security issues requiring interagency coordination. Proceedings of the talks, with outcomes, follow-up actions and future agenda items, will be made available to participants. Possible agenda items (of which one session might only cover 2-3) could include:

--U.S. Interagency Cooperation and Civil-Military Relations (1947 National Security Act; State-Defense/Defense-State Collaborations)

--Regional and Cross Strait Relations (including how CBMs can support these relations)

--Impact of Taiwan's Defense Reforms and Civil-Military Relations

--Interagency Role in Arms Acquisition

--Non-FCS Armaments Acquisition/Production (Direct Commercial Sales; development of domestic production capabilities)

--Export Control and Licensing

--Homeland Security Issues (Critical Infrastructure Protection; Continuity of Operations; harbor protection)
YOUNG